

ACCESS AUTHENTICATION SYSTEM

An access authentication system is provided for authenticating access for visitors to a wireless local area network (W-LAN), the operator of which

5 administers a visitor authentication, authorisation and accounting (VAAA) server. A user requesting visiting access to the W-LAN, is required to have a valid cellular mobile account, a portable computing device with a browser and a valid W-LAN card from another operator that administers a home authentication, authorisation and accounting (HAAA) server. The user, on requesting visiting

10 access to the W-LAN, inputs, via the VAAA server, identity information that enables the HAAA to issue a personal identification number (PIN) which is encoded and forwarded, preferably by way of a short message service (SMS), to the user's mobile telephone. This encoded PIN is transferred to the browser to authenticate the requested visiting access to the W-LAN, and the costs associated

15 with such access are billed to the user's cellular mobile account; the requested access being achieved via the user's browser. The user may employ the browser to convey the identity information, via the W-LAN, to the VAAA. Alternatively, the user may call the VAAA on the mobile telephone to provide said identity information, in which case, the subject telephone call is preferably forwarded to

20 the HAAA via a premium rate call unit.